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Winter 2015

Book Review: Baptist Foundations

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Recommended Citation

Kimble, Jeremy M., "Book Review: Baptist Foundations" (2015). *Biblical and Theological Studies Faculty Publications*. 413.
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approach. More of this is surely needed today and Burge is to be congratulated for his efforts here. His book will benefit teachers, pastors, and students at every level.

Ryan O'Dowd
Ithaca, New York

Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman, eds. *Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age*. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2015. vii + 397 pp. Hardback. ISBN 978-1433681042. \$31.99 (Hardback).

Commitment to and trust in the church has seemingly been on the decline in Western culture for some time. Even in doctrinal study, ecclesiology can receive short shrift in relation to other topics of theology. Thankfully, however, a number of ministries are currently dedicated to bringing our attention back to the church, both in a theological and practical sense. On the forefront of this ecclesiological renaissance, Mark Dever and Jonathan Leeman—who have labored on a number of works regarding this topic—have helped produce a work dedicated to the right ordering of the church, such that churches can truly understand and experience biblical renewal and re-establish trust and commitment in our present age.

Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age focuses on the idea of church polity or governance. In the introduction Leeman lays out what becomes a central argument of the book: “The difference between a local church and a group of Christians is nothing more or less than church polity. To argue for polity is to argue for the existence of the local church” (p. 1). Leeman lays the groundwork in this introductory chapter to help the reader understand that every church has some way of constituting itself, maintaining criteria for membership, and making decisions. However, one must be careful to study Scripture in order to rightly know who possesses authority, what leadership offices are in the church, and how one determines who is either within or outside the bounds of the gospel (p. 2). The authors of this work labor to demonstrate from Scripture (and tradition) that an elder-led, deacon-served, congregationally-governed church is what comprises a biblical polity.

After the introductory chapter this work is divided into five distinct parts. First, two chapters are spent dealing with the historical

roots and biblical/theological case for congregationalism as a proper approach to church governance. The authors aver that “under the lordship of Christ and under the authority of divinely given elders who lead, the last and final court of appeal in matters related to the local church is the congregation itself” (p. 49). Specifically, in a biblical/theological sense, congregationalism is argued for in that the redemptive developments of the new covenant and an already/not yet eschatology necessitate this new leadership paradigm.

Part two spends five chapters outlining the biblical and historical realities of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Emphasis is placed numerous times on the fact that the ordinances are a visible manifestation of the gospel, and as such are of great importance. Part three deals with the closely related issues of church membership and church discipline. These two serve as the identifying markers of the church, since “a church does not so much have members as it is its members” (p. 165). Membership and discipline must be properly understood if one is to grasp both the nature of the church and the means by which we can ensure health within the church. Part four, the lengthiest section of the book, delineates the realities of how elders and deacons should function in the church. Here, both historically and biblically, an elder-led, deacon-served structure is argued for, where elders are committed to the service of the Word and deacons enact a service dedicated to practical matters. In the final section of the book Leeman addresses a congregational approach to unity, holiness, apostolicity, and catholicity.

A particular strength of this work is the way in which the contributors have written a work on polity that is robust and far-reaching, reminiscent of the way in which church governance was once treated (see, for instance, Mark Dever’s *Polity* for some excellent historical examples of this). Each contributor has some tie to the Southern Baptist Convention, which may in some ways limit its readership. However, potential readers should understand that this work is an excellent contribution to the discussion on church governance that goes beyond pragmatic concerns, to guidance gained from biblical and theological realities. Admittedly, much of the content can be found in many other books on ecclesiology, but readers will find unique and helpful contributions from the chapters by Stephen and Kirk Wellum regarding how the new covenant and inaugurated eschatology affect the idea of priesthood and congregationalism, as well as all of the chapters by Jonathan Leeman.

The reality of the “keys of the kingdom” receives ample attention from Leeman, and readers will be readily helped by his penetrating insight on how this matter relates to polity.

Pastors, church leaders, and scholars alike will benefit from this book. The real challenge, however, is left to the members of ordinary churches. Thus, for both pastors and church members, it seems fitting to conclude with this point from James Leo Garrett: “The congregation is where the reform will be won or lost, and leadership is crucial” (p. xi).

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Kenneth A. Kitchen and Paul J. H. Lawrence. *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East*. 3 vols. Wiesbaden, Germany: Harrassowitz, 2012. 1642 pp. Hardback. ISBN: 978-3447067263. € 298 (Hardback).

The three oversized (8.5 inches by 12 inches) and hefty (nearly 10 pounds) volumes of *Treaty, Law and Covenant in the Ancient Near East* (TLC) are a magisterial achievement in textual collocation and embody the quintessence of ancient Near East (ANE) literary genre comparison. TLC includes a total of 106 documents. These span three millennia and are written in ten languages from Anatolia to Arabia, the Nile to Mesopotamia. As the title suggests, the volumes focus on ANE law-collections, treaties between communities, and covenants between individuals and groups.

The purpose of the volumes is to gather and analyze the main textual witnesses of ancient Near Eastern treaties, laws, and covenants in one location. The authors extend Mendenhall’s proposal of comparing the biblical texts to 14th-13th century BC Hittite treaties to examine the entire ANE corpus “in its own right.” The volumes took Kitchen nearly sixty years to complete with Lawrence’s contribution finally finishing the project.

The first volume contains texts in transcription and translation that are arranged by date (oldest to youngest), region (East, West, North, South), and similar text type (law, covenant, etc.). The compendium is not meant to be a new text-edition of each document but an accessible anthology which the authors desire to be useful for comparative study. Most of the documents are presented with a transcription on the verso and an English translation on the recto. Arranging the lines in parallel on facing pages provides for easy